

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 4115

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, RO, IS
SUBJECT: COMMENTS BY PASSPORT DIRECTOR ON VISIT OF CYRUS
ABBE TO ROMANIA

1. PASSPORT DIRECTOR POPESCU RAISED ISSUE OF VISIT TO ROMANIA
BY CYRUS ABBE DURING JUNE 12 CALL BY CONSUL AND OTHER EMBOFFS.
ABBE CAME TO ROMANIA IN APRIL AS INFORMAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF U.S. JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS WITH PURPOSE OF COLLECTING
INFORMATION ABOUT JEWISH EMIGRATION SITUATION. HE CARRIED
LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN RANGEL EXPRESSING INTEREST IN DATA
AND IMPRESSIONS ACQUIRED FROM TRIP. IN BUCHAREST, ABBE
SOUGHT OUT JEWS INTERESTED IN EMIGRATING BUT WHO HAD BEEN
DENIED PASSPORT APPLICATION FORMS OR EXIT PERMISSION, OR WHO
FEARED CONSEQUENCES AND HAD NEVER ATTEMPTED TO SECURE EXIT
PERMISSION.

2. ABBE COLLECTED LETTERS FROM JEWS WANTING TO LEAVE
FOR ISRAEL OR OTHER STATES, INSISTING HE WOULD ATTEMPT
DEPART ROMANIA WITH THE LETTERS. HE WAS REPEATEDLY
WARNED BY EMBOFFS THAT SOLICITING AND CARRYING SUCH
LETTERS AROUND COULD ENDANGER WRITERS, AS WOULD CON-
FISCATION OF LETTERS AT AIRPORT. LETTERS WERE INDEED
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PICKED UP BY AUTHORITIES AT OTOPENI ON ABBE'S DEPARTURE;
IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FROM CONGRESSMAN WAXMAN, EMBASSY
FORWARDED COPIES OF LETTERS TO EUR/EE MAY 8 FOR TRANS-
MITTAL TO CONGRESSMEN WAXMAN AND RANGEL.

3. DURING JUNE 12 CALL, GENERAL POPESCU REVIEWED ABBE'S
ACTIVITIES AS OUTLINED ABOVE, OMITTING MENTION OF ABBE'S

AFFILIATIONS AND LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN RANGEL. POPESCU SAID THAT HE HAD READ IN PRESS BRIEFING TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH ABBE BROADCAST ON RFE, AND DECLARED THAT ABBE'S ACTIVITIES HAD BEEN UNCONSTRUCTIVE, AIMED ONLY AT MAKING PROPAGANDA ABOUT EMIGRATION. CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES, POPESCU SAID, HAD ACTED CORRECTLY IN TAKING LETTERS ABBE HAD COLLECTED.

4. POPESCU WENT ON TO SAY HE HAD SEEN PROOF THAT ABBE HAD TAKEN MONEY FROM VARIOUS FAMILIES IN EXCHANGE FOR INTERVENTION ON THEIR BEHALF. CONSUL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS HAD SEEN MR. ABBE, WHOSE VISIT WAS NOT OFFICIAL, AND EXPRESSED INTEREST IN SEEING EVIDENCE THAT MR. ABBE HAD TAKEN MONEY. POPESCU SAID THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO SHARE EVIDENCE, AGAIN INSISTING THAT HE HAD SEEN IT, AND SAID HE WOULD SEE WHAT EVIDENCE AND FURTHER DETAILS HE MIGHT LATER GIVE US. HE AFFIRMED THAT ABBE WOULD NOT AGAIN BE ALLOWED TO ENTER ROMANIA, WHETHER AS TOURIST OR FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE. NOTING THAT ABBE HAD COME TO BUCHAREST AS PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZEN, NOT AS USG OFFICIAL, AND THAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTING CHARGES HAD NOT BEEN PRODUCED, CONSUL DECLINED FURTHER COMMENT. MEMCON BEING POUCHED EUR/EE.

5. COMMENT: POPESCU'S ALLEGATIONS THAT ABBE TOOK MONEY FOR RAISING WESTERN INTEREST ON INDIVIDUALS' BEHALFS
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ARE AS GOOD A BASIS AS ANY FOR RATIONALIZING DECLARATION THAT ABBE IS UNWELCOME IN ROMANIA. GOR SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN STUNG MORE BY "PROPAGANDA" RESULTING FROM VISIT THAN BY FACT THAT ABBE GATHERED INFORMATION: IT (STRONGLY) REMAINS OFFICIAL ROMANIAN POLICY THAT ROMANIA IS NOT A COUNTRY OF EMIGRATION, AND BROADCAST REFERENCES TO "EMIGRATION" VICE "FAMILY REUNIFICATION" MUST HAVE HURT. THIS AFFAIR REINFORCES OUR VIEW THAT UNOFFICIAL EMISSARIES ARE NOT THE MOST EFFECTIVE VARIETY, BEING MORE VULNERABLE TO OFFICIAL INTERFERENCE WHILE HERE AND TO OFFICIAL CHARGES AFTER DEPARTURE. ALSO, SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, ABBE CONDUCTED INVESTIGATIONS HERE OPENLY, BUT WITHOUT PRIOR NOTIFICATION TO ROMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND WITHOUT CONTACTING BUCHAREST OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH EMIGRATION, AND GOR, ALWAYS SENSITIVE ABOUT "INTERFERENCE," WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER HANDLED THROUGH CONTACT WITH OFFICIALS. IN SUM, WHILE OFFICIAL CHANNELS HAVE REGRETTABLE BUT RECOGNIZABLE LIMITATIONS, USING THEM IS STILL MORE LIKELY TO PRODUCE CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS THAN FREE AGENTS LIKE ABBE.
AGGREY

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